

early 1900s, when a group of women pioneers and settlers assembled to address community needs. They provided local law enforcement when no other authority existed, medicinal services when a doctor was not available, and food and clothing for children and families in need. The group also founded both a medical clinic and a public library, and to this day, the Fort Walton Public Library provides vital services to the community.

The Fort Walton Beach General Federation of Women's Club is well known for their many invaluable contributions to the arts, environment, education, domestic violence prevention, home life, and our nation's veterans. The Club's commitment to providing resources to our veterans and their families is invaluable to the Northwest Florida community and serves as a shining example for others. As Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I understand the vital importance of serving those who have worn the uniform, and I am extremely grateful for the patriotic and dedicated service that the Club offers to Northwest Florida's veterans.

On behalf of the United States Congress, I congratulate and offer thanks to the Fort Walton Beach General Federation of Women's Club on 90 years of exemplary service. My wife Vicki joins me in offering our best wishes to the Women's Club for their success as they continue to carry out their laudable mission and for their dedication to bettering the lives of those around them.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1540, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012

SPEECH OF

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose adoption of the Conference Report on H.R. 1540; the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012. This bill includes dangerous provisions that put fundamental American values at risk.

Section 1021 of this Conference Report authorizes the President of the United States to detain indefinitely—without charge, without trial, and without due process—any individual suspected of terrorism. The section is written so broadly it raises legal questions about whether indefinite detention may be applicable to American citizens detained on American soil. Specifically, this provision empowers the President to detain anyone who “substantially supported” forces “associated” with al-Qaeda or the Taliban that are “engaged in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners.” It is troubling and problematic that the legislation fails to define any of these terms.

In an editorial today titled “Politics Over Principle” the New York Times argued against the legislation saying it could grant presidents “the authority to throw American citizens into prison for life without charges or a trial.” Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, a sponsor of the Senate's defense authorization bill, stated clearly the far-reaching intent of this section. He said the indefinite detention provision: “does apply to American citizens, and it designates the world as the battlefield, including the homeland.”

Proponents of these indefinite detention powers argue the language merely codifies policies instituted by the George W. Bush Administration and continued under the current administration. This argument ignores the fact these policies are quite possibly unconstitutional. Congress should be investigating and reforming existing policies, not codifying them as permanent American law.

Congress has a sacred duty to defend the liberties that generations of Americans fought to establish and preserve. This conference report sacrifices the most fundamental of those liberties while gaining little, if any, additional security. If the provisions of Section 1021 are enacted, it would be the first time Congress has enshrined indefinite detention into law since the McCarthy Era.

In addition, the Conference Report before us today is a disappointing statement about fiscal responsibility. When the Defense Authorization bill passed the House in May, it included my amendment to cap funding for military bands at \$200 million. This amendment would have saved taxpayers \$125 million. Unfortunately, the Senate stripped this relatively modest but sensible cut from the bill. By protecting a bloated budget for the military's bands, it would appear that the Senate is elevating pomp and circumstance to a national security priority at the expense of fiscal responsibility. If Congress does not have the gumption to limit spending on military bands to \$200 million in a time of financial crisis, how will we be able to cut the \$600 billion from the defense budget required by the upcoming budget sequestration?

Mr. Speaker, I cannot vote for this national defense authorization. Congress should pass a bill that supports our troops and their families, responds to emerging threats to our national security. However, I cannot support legislation that erodes basic American freedoms.

I request unanimous consent to insert a copy of the aforementioned New York Times editorial into the RECORD with my remarks.

[From The New York Times, Dec. 15, 2011]

POLITICS OVER PRINCIPLE

The trauma of Sept. 11, 2001, gave rise to a dangerous myth that, to be safe, America had to give up basic rights and restructure its legal system. The United States was now in a perpetual state of war, the argument went, and the criminal approach to fighting terrorism—and the due process that goes along with it—wasn't tough enough.

President George W. Bush used this insidious formula to claim that his office had the inherent power to detain anyone he chose, for as long as he chose, without a trial; to authorize the torture of prisoners; and to spy on Americans without a warrant. President Obama came into office pledging his dedication to the rule of law and to reversing the Bush-era policies. He has fallen far short.

Mr. Obama refused to entertain any investigation of the abuses of power under his predecessor, and he has been far too willing to adopt Mr. Bush's extravagant claims of national secrets to prevent any courthouse accountability for those abuses. This week, he is poised to sign into law terrible new measures that will make indefinite detention and military trials a permanent part of American law.

The measures, contained in the annual military budget bill, will strip the F.B.I., federal prosecutors and federal courts of all or most of their power to arrest and prosecute terrorists and hand it off to the military, which has made clear that it doesn't

want the job. The legislation could also give future presidents the authority to throw American citizens into prison for life without charges or a trial. The bill, championed by Republicans in the House and Senate, was attached to the military budget bill to make it harder for Mr. Obama to veto it.

Nearly every top American official with knowledge and experience spoke out against the provisions, including the attorney general, the defense secretary, the chief of the F.B.I., the secretary of state, and the leaders of intelligence agencies. And, for weeks, the White House vowed that Mr. Obama would veto the military budget if the provisions were left in. On Wednesday, the White House reversed field, declaring that the bill had been improved enough for the president to sign it now that it had passed the Senate.

This is a complete political cave-in, one that reinforces the impression of a fumbling presidency. To start with, this bill was utterly unnecessary. Civilian prosecutors and federal courts have jailed hundreds of convicted terrorists, while the tribunals have convicted a half-dozen.

And the modifications are nowhere near enough. Mr. Obama, his spokesman said, is prepared to sign this law because it allows the executive to grant a waiver for a particular prisoner to be brought to trial in a civilian court. But the legislation's ban on spending any money for civilian trials for any accused terrorist would make that waiver largely meaningless.

The bill has so many other objectionable aspects that we can't go into them all. Among the worst: It leaves open the possibility of subjecting American citizens to military detention and trial by a military court. It will make it impossible to shut the prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. And it includes an unneeded expansion of the authorization for the use of military force in Afghanistan to include indefinite detention of anyone suspected of being a member of Al Qaeda or an amorphous group of “associated forces” that could cover just about anyone arrested anywhere in the world.

There is no doubt. This bill will make it harder to fight terrorism and do more harm to the country's international reputation. The White House said that if implementing it jeopardizes the rule of law, it expects Congress to work “quickly and tirelessly” to undo the damage. The White House will have to make that happen. After it abdicated its responsibility this week, we're not convinced it will.

HONORING SUMMERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL JAZZ @ 8 ADVANCED JAZZ CHOIR

HON. JEFF DENHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor the Summerville High School Jazz @ 8 Advanced Jazz Choir for their exceptional performance at the 2011 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree.

The Jazz @ 8 Advanced Jazz Choir has a 30-year history of outstanding performances. This year, the 18-member group is comprised of 10 girls and 8 boys, ranging from sophomores to seniors. The members, Camille Berringer, Adria Britton, Ian Britton, Joaquin David, Tonysha Hadden, Justin Jones, Kai Kellerman, Karissa Kinkle, Max Kohl, Sam Kohl, Charlie McClung, Hank Miller, Maeve Moriarty, Mikayla Murry, Morgan Murry, Rebekah O'Kelley, Aubreana Woodworth, and

Autumn Worden are students of Summerville High School and the Connections Visual and Performing Arts Academy. This educational facility was established 10 years ago on the Summerville campus to support the interests of students in visual and performing arts. Jazz @ 8 is directed by Madeline Young, the vocal music and drama director and teacher. Throughout the school year, this group performs at many community and school events, including parades, veteran ceremonies, luncheons for service groups, benefit dinners, and at local football and basketball games.

The invitation to perform in Washington D.C. was a distinguished honor, and the students rehearsed every day to prepare. Accompanying the group to Washington, D.C. was Diana Harford, Principal of the Connections Visual and Performing Arts Academy and David Urquhart, Principal of Summerville High School. The Tuolumne County community, which is a small, rural community in the Sierra Nevada foothills of central California, was enormously generous and supportive of the students, the program and the school, providing the entire funding for the students to be able to make this once in a lifetime trip. In a very short amount of time, generous contributions ranging from \$20 to over \$6,000 were received to raise the \$20,000 to cover all the costs for the four-day trip. Large donors include Summerville High School Foundation, Sonora Area Foundation, Black Hats, and Black Oak Casino.

In addition to the tree lighting performance, the talented group of young adults performed at the White House for two hours during public tours and the Library of Congress during the 2011 Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony reception hosted by the California State Society and sponsored by Southern California Edison.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and commending the Summerville High School Jazz @ 8 Advanced Jazz Choir on this accomplishment, and for representing the city and county of Tuolumne in such a positive light.

RECOGNIZING DANIEL MAUGHAN, BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA HEROISM AWARD RECIPIENT

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to recognize Daniel Maughan of Euless, Texas, for receiving the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Heroism Award. The Heroism Award is the third-highest award presented by BSA for lifesaving and meritorious action. This award is reserved for individuals who have demonstrated heroism and skill in saving or attempting to save a life. Since the award's inception in 1923, Boy Scouts of America has only awarded approximately 3,500 recipients this distinguished honor.

On May 15, 2011, Daniel's father, Mike Maughan, Ph.D., suffered a heart attack due to an unknown blood clot that quickly traveled to his pulmonary artery. In an act of heroism, Daniel performed CPR on his father, sustaining his life until paramedics arrived on scene. Due to the trauma caused by the blood

clot, Mike later passed away with his family by his side. Mike was an avid supporter of the Boy Scouts and a mentor to many young men in scouting.

Daniel has earned numerous Boy Scout honors including the rank of Eagle Scout—the highest rank in the Boy Scout organization—and the Silver Palm. Currently, Daniel is a freshman at the Milwaukee School of Engineering, where he is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in mechanical engineering and is a member of the rowing team.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to represent a hero like Daniel. I ask all my colleagues to join me in honoring Daniel for his courageous acts of bravery.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, on January 26, 1995, when the last attempt at a balanced budget amendment passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 300–132, the national debt was \$4,801,405,175,294.28.

Today, it is \$15,099,497,460,357.58. We've added \$10,298,092,285,063.30 dollars to our debt in 16 years. This is \$10 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

INTRODUCING THE AFFORDABLE MORTGAGE FOR HOMEOWNERS ACT

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Affordable Mortgage for Homeowners Act. This bill would reduce the interest rate on all mortgages owned or guaranteed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac to the current—and more affordable—interest rate, which averages four percent.

As our nation is recovering from the worst recession and housing crisis in decades, millions of homeowners continue to struggle to make their mortgage payments and keep their homes. Approximately 22 percent or 10.7 million of homeowners owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth. In 2011, two million households received a foreclosure filing. Furthermore, the total mortgage debt overhang in the United States approaches \$700 billion dollars. The state of Florida is by far one of the hardest hit regions in the country.

During the height of the subprime mortgage crisis in 2008, many recognized that it was the predatory lending practices of mortgage lenders that pushed millions of homeowners to purchase homes they could not afford. Today, millions of responsible homeowners have underwater mortgages, because of these unscrupulous lending practices and declining home values. I refuse to let American families struggle through no fault of their own.

While the U.S. government has established programs to help homeowners who are both current and in default on their mortgages, it has not been enough. Indeed, many households did not qualify for these programs or were not aware of their existence. My bill will fix this problem by requiring Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to reduce the interest rate on all the mortgages they own to the current interest rate, which averages four percent. Homeowners who have a better mortgage product or want to opt out will be exempted. My bill is the first program that will directly help millions of homeowners and address the housing crisis comprehensively.

Mr. Speaker, homeownership is a central part of the American dream. Ensuring that people are able to maintain this critical investment is essential to achieving sustainable growth and economic development in our communities. Millions of responsible Americans continue to bear the cost of this economic crisis. I find this to be unacceptable. They deserve fair and affordable mortgages that allow them to plan for the future. This is why I urge my colleagues to take a major step towards ending the housing crisis and support this important legislation.

HONORING STANISLAUS NATIONAL FOREST SERVICE

HON. JEFF DENHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 19, 2011

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor Stanislaus National Forest Service for supplying the 2011 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. No season generates more enthusiasm, heightened sense of good will, deeper traditions, and economic benefits than the annual Christmas season, and the Stanislaus National Forest Service provided the single and most beautiful symbol of the season—the Christmas Tree.

This year, Speaker of the House JOHN BOEHNER hosted the tree lighting ceremony on the West Front Lawn of the United States Capitol Building on Tuesday, December 6. Seven-year-old Johnny Crawford from Sonora, California was the lucky child who flipped the switch and turned on the 10,000 LED lights that illuminated the tree.

Since 1970, it has become an honor for one of the National Forests to be asked to provide the Capitol Tree. The appointed National Forest, in turn, engages help from diverse partners throughout its respective State. The opportunity to provide the Capitol Christmas Tree becomes a state-wide celebration and civic event, leaving a lasting impression on all who are fortunate enough to be involved.

2011 is only the fourth time California has provided the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree—the last time was in 1995. Known as “The People's Tree,” the 2011 Capitol Christmas Tree was harvested from the Stanislaus National Forest located in the Central Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The Forest Service recommended 15 trees to the Superintendent of the U.S. Capitol Grounds, Ted Bechtel, in late August of 2011. He made his final decision after a good night's sleep. Several aspects are taken into account during the selection, including the shape and